

# WEIRE ROTH

A historical timeline of Kansas Department of Labor systems.



### 1970s

1990s

#### KANSAS JOINS THE COMPUTER AGE

It wasn't all bell-bottoms and disco: A two-year recession, persistent high unemployment (Kansas reached 4.2% in 1976), the oil crisis and an inflation crisis marked the decade's economic landscape. Desktop workstations were not in common use in most businesses.

To support the increasing demands of its growing workforce and economy, the Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL) installed a state-of-the-art mainframe in 1977. Like other states, Kansas chose a mainframe written in COBOL-VSAM, the most widely used programming language in the world at the time.

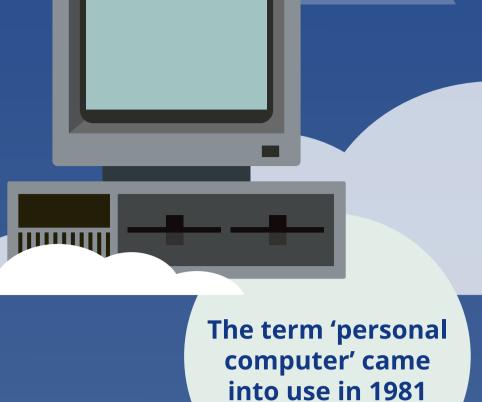


### 1980s

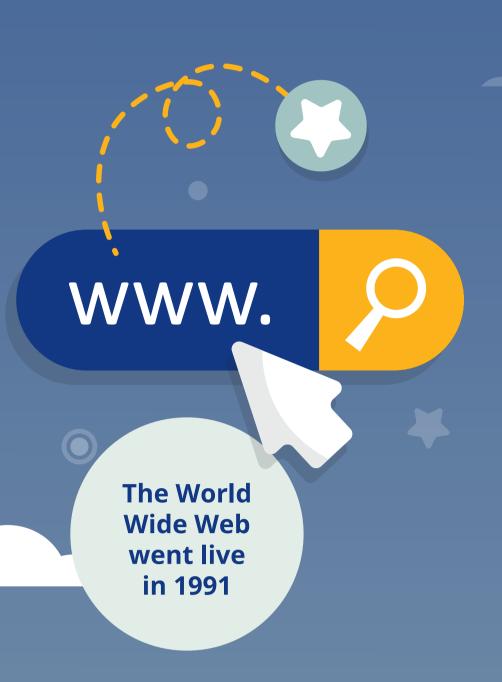
#### MORE USERS, MINOR UPDATES

The decade of big money kicked off with a recession of its own and a national unemployment rate that reached 10.8%, and 7.1% in Kansas. Meanwhile, personal technology took center stage, with portable music players, CDs, and VCRs dominating consumer culture. Big, clunky desktop computers made their way into homes, campuses and public institutions—including job search centers.

unemployment benefits and access to new



To support the increased demand for job listing databases, KDOL invested in small upgrades to its mainframe.



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**Smartphones make** 

the Internet a

constant — and more

accessible — resource

for everyone

#### THE DAWN OF THE INTERNET

Another recession at the start of the decade saw the national unemployment rate rise to 7.4% and unemployment in Kansas reach 5%. New ways of getting connected—the "World Wide Web," personal cell phones and text messaging—sustained and expanded the economy and created new jobs.

Even with the proportionally higher demand and the new need for connectivity, KDOL's information technology infrastructure kept running. Still, the system was beginning to show its age and required increasing maintenance to accommodate new demands.



#### The Internet generated the

decade's first big bust and recession, followed by a second, deeper recession driven by the housing market. Unemployment rose as high as 9.9% nationwide and climbed to 7.3% in Kansas. This happened as flip phones, MP3 players, and laptops made technology more personal.

KDOL and its aged mainframe struggled to implement federal relief programs during the recession of 2002-03 and the unemployment crisis of 2009-10. A modernization project started in 2002 and was well underway by the end of the decade.



## **2010s**

modernization project was cut short. Its cancellation in 2011 coincided with the nation starting to recover from the global financial crisis that saw national unemployment rise as high as 9.3% and Kansas' unemployment rate reach 7.2%. Consumer and industrial technology advanced to make smartphones the norm, with streaming services and the

"Internet of Things" becoming part of the

Unfortunately, the benefits mainframe

NOPE, NO UPGRADE

fabric of life.

Meanwhile, programmers who knew the mainframe's decades-old programming language, COBOL-VSAM, were retiring—making the task of supporting Kansas' ever-larger population with an outdated system even more difficult.

**2020s** 

#### New decade, new economic

challenge—except this one generated a 14.7% unemployment rate nationally and 12.6% unemployment rate in Kansas during April 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered businesses across the country almost overnight. The creaky old mainframe is struggling

under the pressure to protect against unprecedented identity theft while simultaneously supporting millions of Kansans—more than ever before—in receiving unemployment benefits under a half-dozen new state and federal programs.



In 2020, video conferencing and ecommerce kept us connected and safe during the pandemic



### MOVING FORWARD TO SERVE KANSAS The road has been difficult, and the mainframe that got us

here is beyond outdated. But even with that major limitation, we have been able to support millions of Kansans and pay out the largest dollar amount of unemployment benefits in Kansas history. We have worked hard to connect claimants with the temporary state and federal programs that are intended to help them get through this pandemic.

- and expanding its hours
- launching an improved KDOL website to make information easier to find
- stopping fraud and scammers with identity verification, multi-factor authentication and more cyber-security measures
- implementing numerous new relief programs, even with an outdated system that wasn't designed to handle them continuing to modernize the unemployment

insurance mainframe at long last with legislation to

fund \$37.5 million in improvements over 3-5 years



We're fighting to get Kansans the support they deserve today and in the future.